

## Butterflies in the New Forest in 1970

By Rear Admiral A. D. TORLESSE, C.B., D.S.O., R.N.

The cold weather of early March continued with little intermission until the end of April, and spring came late. But thereafter there was little or no frost and, coming as it did after the rather favourable butterfly season of 1969, this probably accounted for the relatively good showing of our native butterflies in the New Forest and elsewhere in England later in the Year.

The first Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni* Linn.) appeared in my garden at Sway on 26th March, but thereafter butterflies were conspicuous by their absence until the end of April when the Brimstones appeared in numbers, with an occasional Green-veined White (*Pieris napi* Linn.), Peacock (*Nymphalis io* Linn.) and Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae* Linn.). On 5th May the first Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus* Linn.) appeared; this butterfly was noticed occasionally here and there in the Forest till late May, but contrary to normal experience the second brood, though short in duration, proved to be much more numerous than the first. The Brimstone was plentiful, following a very good emergence the previous summer, and was seen on the wing as late as 28th June.

The Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Argynnis euphrosyne* Linn.) was first noticed on 18th May, but was not fully out until some ten days later. It was noticeably more numerous in the Forest than for some years past, but another May butterfly, the Duke of Burgundy (*Hamearis lucina* Linn.) did not reappear in some of its old haunts in the southern half of the New Forest, from which it has been absent for several years at least. The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Argynnis selene* Linn.) was not seen until 30th June and seemed to be far less numerous than *A. euphrosyne*. Even in such a favourable year both butterflies were much less plentiful in the New Forest than formerly.

The White Admiral (*Limenitis camilla* Linn.), first noticed on 29th June, was well up in numbers compared with 1969. The Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia* Linn.), well out by mid July, was also more numerous than for several years past, but again this year the High Brown Fritillary (*Argynnis cydippe* Linn.), once so plentiful in the New Forest, was very scarce indeed. Two reports of the Purple Emperor (*Apature iris* Linn.) having been seen in the Forest reached me, but neither could be confirmed and one was almost certainly a case of mistaken identity.

Generally, it was a good year for most of our common native species. The Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria* Linn.) appeared in fair numbers throughout the summer, though it never reached the extraordinary abundance of 1967. The Wall Brown (*Pararge megera* Linn.) was not much in evidence, but the Grayling (*Eumenis semele* Linn.) had a better year, while the Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina* Linn.), Hedge Brown (*M. tithonus* L.), Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperanthus* L.), Small Heath (*Caenonympha pamphilus* Linn.) and Silver-studded Blue (*Plebejus argus* Linn.) were all in plenty, the Meadow Brown having an unusually long season and almost certainly a second brood. But the Small Copper (*Lycaena phleas* Linn.) remained relatively scarce, and little was seen of the Green-Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi* Linn.).

The second brood of the Holly Blue was a welcome surprise; though never appearing in large numbers the butterfly was noticeable all over the

Forest for a short period in late July and early August, when a splendid emergence of Brimstones and Peacocks and rather smaller numbers of Small Tortoiseshells occurred, and the Purple Hairstreak (*Thecla quercus* Linn.) was in more than usual numbers. The Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus* Rott.), so scarce in many parts of the country for some years past, appeared sparingly in the Forest in August this year, and was seen in abundance on a West Hampshire down in late August, flying together with large number of Chalk Hill (*Lysandra coridon* Poda) and Adonis (*L. bellargus* Rott.) Blues, the Brown Argus (*Aricia agestis* Schiff.) and some belated Dark Green Fritillaries (*Argynnis aglaia* Linn.), a sight to gladden any butterfly lover's heart.

Although in some respects a rather notable year for our native species, it was certainly not so for the immigrants, the Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady and Red Admiral being all relatively scarce in this neighbourhood. But even in such a favourable year for the natives there was no sign of the more spectacular New Forest butterflies, notably the four species of Fritillary formerly so abundant, reappearing in their former numbers, and it is reasonable to ask why. The most noticeable change that has taken place in the Forest, apart from the much more widespread planting of conifers, is the absence of the bramble from the rides in the inclosures, and the general scarcity in these rides of flowering plants, in particular of the Dog Violet, the foodplant of all four fritillaries. Spraying of the ride verges with a brushwood inhibitor has certainly been carried out in many of the inclosures, to what extent and with what frequency is not known. It is also fairly certain that over-grazing to an ever-increasing extent since the last war by the greatly increased numbers of deer has been an important contributory cause of the scarcity within the inclosures both of the larval foodplant and of the bramble. Similarly, over-grazing outside the inclosures by the ever-increasing numbers of animals enjoying Commoners' grazing rights has contributed to the relative scarcity of some of the heathland species, which have also to compete with more frequent heather cutting and burning as well as with the trampling of the hordes of spring and summer campers

## Some Egg Laying and Larval Habits of *Papilio machaon* L. (The Swallowtail Butterfly)

By JOHN McFEELY

Early on 14th June 1970, I set out for the Norfolk Broads with the object of seeing, for the first time, the swallowtail in its natural English habitat. On arrival, disappointment appeared certain as a heavily clouded sky, supplemented by light rain and a constant north east wind was the order of the day. These conditions, quite unlike the glorious weather of the past few days, were to prevail until after my return in the late afternoon.

Even the hardiest butterflies would not venture out in these almost winter-like conditions, so, leaving the net in the boot of the car, I decided to try my luck looking for swallowtail ova. Searching a small and neglected-looking reed bed, one of several found near most of the broads, it did not take long before I found milk parsley (*Pseucedanum palustre*) growing in the reeds. Shortly afterwards I examined a large plant at the